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TAGS:SENV, OTRA, IN (PETERSON, RUSSELL)

SUBJECT: TRAVEL OF COUNCIL OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY CHAIRMAN

RUSSELL PETERSON

REFS: A. STATE 294297. B. DELHI 16635. C. DELHI 16754

1. THE FOLLOWING IS A DELINEATION OF INDIAN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND PROGRAMS AND US COOPERATION WITH INDIA IN THIS FIELD, FOR CHAIRMAN PETERSON'S INFORMATION.

2. PRIOR TO THE UN STOCKHOLM CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT IN JUNE 1972, INDIA HAD HIGH HOPES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL PROGRAM OF CONTROL AND FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON WORLDWIDE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS. A NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND COORDINATION WAS ESTABLISHED IN FEBRUARY 1972 AND INAUGURATED BY THE PRIME MINISTER IN APRIL 1972 WITH BROAD GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVING AND IMPROVING HUMAN ENVIRONMENT IN THE COUNTRY, AND TO ESTABLISH NEW POLICIES AND PROGRAMS. DURING THIS PERIOD, A NUMBER OF APPROACH PAPERS WERE PREPARED FOR THE STOCKHOLM CONFERENCE. A HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATION WAS SENT TO THE CONFERENCE HEADED BY C. SUBRAMANIAN, THEN PLANNING MINISTER, UNCLASSIFIED

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AS WELL AS MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, ASSISTED BY

KARAN SINGH, MINISTER OF HEALTH, AND THE LATE PITAMBAR PANT WHO HAD BEEN NAMED CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND COORDINATION (NCEPC).

3. DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS, HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN

A DIMINISHING INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE GOI IN ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS. A PRIMARY CAUSE OF THIS DISINTEREST WAS THE TRAGIC DEATH OF PITAMBAR PANT IN FEBRUARY 1973. PANT WAS THE SPARK PLUG OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM AND ENJOYED THE CONFIDENCE AND TRUST OF THE PRIME MINISTER, AS WELL AS MANY HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIALS IN THE GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT. SINCE PANT'S DEATH, ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS HAVE ALSO SUFFERED

BUDGET CUTS BECAUSE OF THE ENORMOUS INFLATIONARY AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND HAVE NOT RECEIVED A HIGH GOI PRIORITY. HOWEVER, IN THE PAST YEAR, THERE HAS BEEN SOME REJUVENATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL INTEREST IN THE COUNTRY, AND THE PRIME MINISTER RECONSTITUTED THE NCEPC IN JANUARY 1975. THE TWENTY-MAN COMMITTEE OF EMINENT SCIENTISTS IS HEADED BY DR. B.D. NAG CHAUDHURI, VICE CHANCELLOR OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY AND THE INDIAN CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE INDO-US JOINT SUBCOMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY. THE NCEPC IS RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEWING EXISTING LEGISLATION AND ADMINISTRATION MACHINERY, IDENTIFYING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND PROPOSING SOLUTIONS, AND TO PROMOTE RESEARCH. THE SECRETARIAT OF THE NCEPC IS LOCATED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND HEADED BY DR. A.K. KHOSLA, DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE DOST.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION RESULTING FROM INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, WATER AND AIR POLLUTION, AND NUCLEAR RADIATION IS NOT AN IMMEDIATE PROBLEM FOR THE INDIANS. HOWEVER, THE EXTENT OF POLLUTION IN LARGE CITIES, E.G., CALCUTTA, BOMBAY, DELHI, AND MADRAS HAS SHOWN MARKED INCREASE OVER THE PAST DECADE. THE RAPID DETERIORATION, ACCORDING TO SURVEYS CONDUCTED BY NATIONAL LABORATORIES IN THE QUALITY OF AIR AND WATER, PESTICIDE TOXICOLOGY, AND EFFECT OF POLLUTED ENVIRONMENT RESULTING FROM POOR SANITATION AND HYGIENE ON THE PHYSIOLOGICAL AND BIOCHEMICAL CHANGES IN MEN, HAVE UNCLASSIFIED

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DRIVEN THE ADMINISTRATORS AND SCIENTISTS ALIKE TO SEEK LEGISLATION TO COUNTERACT AND NEUTRALIZE OFFENSIVE HEALTH HAZARDS. IN THIS REGARD, THE PARLIAMENT HAS PASSED THE CLEAN WATER ACT AND IS IN THE PROCESS OF FRAMING AN AIR POLLUTION ACT. ASSISTANCE TO INDIANS IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL FIELD WOULD REQUIRE TRANSFER OF TECHNICAL SKILL AND FUNDS FROM DEVELOPED COUNTRIES SINCE INDIA'S OWN NATIONAL LABORATORIES AND RESOURCES ARE NOT ADEQUATE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

AT ADVANCED LEVEL OF SCIENTIFIC TECHNOLOGY.

5. IN REGARD TO INDO-US COOPERATION ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS, A NUMBER OF EPA SCIENTISTS AND ADMINISTRATORS HAVE VISITED INDIA IN THE PAST THREE YEARS TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE COOPERATION. A NUMBER OF JOINT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN INITIATED SUCH AS EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND MICROFILM REPORTS FROM US DOCUMENTS RELATED TO POLLUTION

CONTROL LAW. THERE ARE ABOUT TEN JOINT RESEARCH PROJECTS NOW BEING REVIEWED BY THE GOI FOR COOPERATION WITH EPA UNDER THE SPECIAL FOREIGN CURRENCY PROGRAM. THESE ARE IN THE FIELDS OF DISPOSAL OF SOLID WASTES; DETERMINATION OF TRACE ELEMENTS; STUDY OF UNDER GROUND WATERS; PESTICIDE CONTAMINATION, ETC.

6. THERE WILL ALSO BE SEVERAL RESEARCH PROPOSALS IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND CONTROL OF VIRUSES IN WATER SUBMITTED FOR REVIEW AT THE MEETING OF THE JOINT SUBCOMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, JANUARY 27-29, 1976.

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